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SUBJECT: AMNESTY INT'L PROTEST OVER DETAINEES TURNS INTO
PRODUCTIVE HUMAN RIGHTS DISCUSSION

REF: STATE 26147

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Two representatives from Amnesty International Greece (AI) met with poloffs June 26 to deliver 1000 petitions addressed to President Bush which call for the closure of the detention center at Guantanamo Bay. After poloff delivered reftel talking points in response to criticisms of the facility, the cordial meeting then moved on to an expansive, productive discussion on human rights concerns in Greece. Meanwhile, there was a peaceful demonstration by about 20 AI members outside the embassy also calling for the closure of the detention center. We expect continued, constructive collaboration with AI on human rights matters in Greece. END SUMMARY.

AI REPS PROTEST GUANTANAMO BAY CONDITIONS

¶2. (U) President Gerasimos Kouvaras and Press Officer Nikos Matroulakis of the Greek branch of Amnesty International (AI) had a cordial meeting with poloffs June 26 to deliver "the first" of 1000 bright orange petitions to President Bush calling for the closure of detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay. AI indicated that these petitions are the culmination of three years of calling for the closure of the facility, and mentioned that UN and EU experts and bodies, including the UN Committee Against Torture, had also called for the closure of the detention center. In addition to the points made in the petitions from AI members and supporters in Greece (transcribed in pp 5), the representatives expressed concern that:

- the Department of Defense, rather than Justice Department, oversees the Guantanamo Bay facility.
- the standards of the Guantanamo Bay facility "fall outside of those considered by Geneva Convention to be legitimate detention conditions."
- the U.S. definition of torture falls short of the Geneva Convention definition.
- if the Guantanamo Bay facility should close, all detainees should be released or given a fair trial, and a similar detention facility should not be opened to replace it.
- independent UN inspectors should be allowed to investigate all allegations of torture or other mistreatment.
- detainees should be ensured recourse to legal procedures now and in the event of transfer to a other facilities.
- physical transfer of detainees should fall within international standards.

EMBASSY RESPONDS

¶3. (U) Poloff used "Rapid Response" and reftel points to describe U.S. policy on detainees, our commitment to respect detainees' rights, our work to improve detainee policies and

procedures, and our attention to proper provisions for detainees. AI listened attentively and respectfully to our points on Guantanamo, and afterward indicated that they would continue their petition campaign until the "necessary" changes were made at the detention center. During the meeting, approximately 20 orange-clad AI members peacefully demonstrated for Guantanamo's closure outside the embassy. (Note: AI requested a June 26 appointment to coincide with the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.) AI Greece issued a press release stating that the petitions would be delivered to the embassy, but told us they did not have plans to share the substance of the meeting publicly.

MEETING TAKES A USEFUL TURN

¶4. (U) After hearing each other out on Guantanamo, AI and embosffs had a wide-ranging, hour-long discussion on mutual human rights concerns in Greece, including detention center and prison conditions (septel), violence against women, police corruption, conscientious objectors, and Roma rights. On trafficking in persons (TIP), AI reps noted that they want a study to be done to determine the scope of the TIP problem, an observation with which we enthusiastically agreed. AI also mentioned their ability to dispatch some of their 4000 registered members on trafficking awareness-raising or other projects. We were given contact information for the Greece research team at AI headquarters in London, and will follow up with them.

PETITION TEXT

¶5. (U) Begin text:

The Honourable George W. Bush
The President of the United States
c/o US Embassy in Athens

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91 Vasilissis Sophias Avenue, Athens 10160

Dear Mr. President,

I am deeply concerned by the reports of torture and ill-treatment by US officials, or with their involvement, that continue to emerge from Guantanamo Bay. Evidence suggests that these are far from isolated incidents.

Mr. President, I urge you to: close the Guantanamo Bay detention facilities and charge the detainees under US law in US courts, or else release them; support the establishment by the US Congress of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate all aspects of USA's "war on terror" detention and interrogation policies and practices; request the Attorney General to appoint a special council to conduct a criminal investigation into involvement of administration officials in torture and ill-treatment; ensure that all US-run "war on terror" detention facilities are opened to regular, independent unannounced and unrestricted visits by UN human rights mechanisms.

Yours sincerely,
Name, Address, Signature, Date
END PETITION TEXT.

¶6. (U) COMMENT: Kouvaras and Matroulakis repeatedly expressed their appreciation for the meeting, and were enthusiastic to continue cooperation with poloffs on other human rights matters. We were pleased with the constructive tone of the meeting, and believe AI Greece can be a useful ally on the human rights issues in Greece that we follow closely.

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